

Rep. Lofgren Sends Letters to Administration on Vietnamese Religious Rights

Washington, D.C. – Last week, Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-San Jose) joined with several of her colleagues in signing letters to President Bush and Secretary of State Rice, urging them to do everything possible to ensure that the Vietnamese government desists from all violent repression of the protestors and supports a negotiated settlement regarding the confiscation of religious property.

Full text of both letters below:

The Honorable George W. Bush
The President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

We write to express concern about the recent dispute between the Archbishop of Hanoi and the Government of Vietnam over the former site of the Vatican Embassy in Hanoi. We are disturbed by recent allegations of religious and human rights violations against the Archdiocese as well as Catholic faithful who have peacefully assembled for prayer vigils at the site in question. We respectfully request that you do everything possible to ensure that the Vietnamese government desists from all violent repression of the protestors. Furthermore, we request that you support a negotiated settlement regarding the confiscated Church property that is at the root of this dispute.

On January 25, 2008, there were reports of a female protester at the former site of the Vatican Embassy being kicked and beaten by police. Another man was beaten while attempting to come to the woman's aid. Authorities claimed that the demonstrations were illegal, and the United States Embassy has asked for clarification of this claim.

The regime in Hanoi must take firm and concrete action to prevent further religious and human rights violations against the Archdiocese of Hanoi and the Catholic faithful in Vietnam. The time has come for the government of Vietnam to recognize the right of religious groups to practice their faiths free of harassment and oppression. For far too long, people of faith have suffered under Hanoi's repressive and brutal rule.

The United States of America has long been a model to the rest of the world as a protector of religious and human rights throughout the world. We hope that you will take the opportunity to ensure that this disagreement does not escalate into additional instances of religious and human rights violations.

Sincerely,

Zoe Lofgren
Michael R. McNulty
Madeleine Bordallo

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Dan Burton

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice,

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Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren is serving her seventh term in Congress representing most of the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County. She serves as Chair of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law. She also Chairs the House Administration Subcommittee on Elections and serves on the House Homeland Security Committee. Congresswoman Lofgren is Chair of the California Democratic Congressional Delegation consisting of 34 Democratic members of the U.S. House of Representatives from California.